Boy killed in South Waziristan terrorist attack

By Our Correspondent

SOUTH WAZIRISTAN: A nine-year-old boy was killed on Wednesday when terrorists opened fire at a police official near a makeshift checkpoint in Sharkanai area of Toi Khula, Lower South Waziristan, officials said.

They said that a constable, Habib and a local resident were passing through the area when armed militants intercepted them and opened fire.

The police retaliated immediately, triggering an exchange of gunfire. Amid the crossfire, Baitullah, the young son of a local schoolteacher, Naseebullah Dotani, was fatally hit and died on the spot.

The attackers managed to escape into the nearby hills, while police reinforcements reached the scene and launched a search operation. Investigators collected evidence from the site, and a combing operation was initiated to trace the perpetrators.

Residents of the area expressed grief and deep concern over the killing of the boy, stating that such incidents have created an atmosphere of fear among the local population.

The incident comes just a day after two civilians were shot dead by unidentified gunmen in Tiarza area of Upper South Waziristan, underscoring the deteriorating security situation in the region.

Minister seeks report about irregularities in KPHCIP

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Elementary and Secondary Education Department Arshad Ayub Khan has directed the relevant authorities to submit a report about financial irregularities and use of substandard material in KP Human Capital Investment Project (KPHCIP).

A statement issued here said that Mr Ayub also directed the authorities to submit the compressive report within two weeks.

Mr Ayub stated that financial mismanagement and the use of poor-quality materials in projects launched for public welfare would not be tolerated under any circumstances, and strict disciplinary action would be taken against all those involved.

He instructed monitoring authorities to immediately inspect the schools included in the project, assess construction quality as well as financial records, and submit a report within two weeks.

Furthermore, all activities under this project will be evaluated not only by the education department's monitoring team but also by the monitoring team of the planning and development department, he said.

The minister emphasised that strict action would be taken based on the submitted reports, and any officials or contractors found responsible would face appropriate punishment.

Mr Ayub reaffirmed the government's commitment to merit and transparency, stating that no negligence or wrongdoing would be tolerated. He also directed the monitoring authorities to ensure rigorous oversight of all ongoing projects under the education department and to make sure that work quality was fully maintained.

Mortar shell defused in Bajaur

By Our Correspondent

BAJAUR: Authorities on Wednesday safely defused a mortar shell in Lowi Mamund tehsil of Bajaur district.

According to sources, upon being informed by local residents about the presence of a device in Gohati area, a team from the Bajaur Scouts' Laghari camp moved to the area, recovered the device, and safely defused it.

The sources stated that the local residents should immediately contact the police and the security forces after seeing such explosive devices in their areas, so they could be safely recovered and defusing.

A CHEF barbeques fish at a food outlet at Khattak Chowk, Ring Road, Peshawar. — White Star

'Meddling' by some institutions harming country: CM

Announces scholarships for students of tribal districts at GIK Institute

By Muqaddam Khan

SWABI: Chief Minister Mohammad Sohail Afridi has said that some institutions do not operate within their constitutional limits creating problems for the country.

Presiding over induction ceremony of batch 35 students at Ghulam Ishaq Khan (GIK) Institute of Engineering Sciences and Technology here on Wednesday, he said that strong institutions were a security guarantee. "When some institutions leave their constitutional positions and start meddling in affairs of other institutions unnecessarily, it weakens them and harms the country," he added.

The chief minister did not elaborate, but said that "you people are intelligent enough to understand what I am saying."

The gathering was attended by Prof Fazal Ahmad Khalid, the rector of GIK Institute, Salim Saifullah Khan, the president of Society for Promotion of Engineering Sciences and Technology in Pakistan, Shakil Durrani, the executive director, Prof Syed M Hassan Zaidi, the pro-rector, deans, heads of departments and students.

"Three things are very important for any institution. First the intention is counted as to what is its intention. The second most important thing is directions as to what are the directions of an organisation. The third one is struggle that how the struggle will be made. These three important things should be upheld by an institution while operating," said the chief minister.

He said that he was very happy that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa also had such an institute, which was an example of national integration and immensely contributed to country's progress and prosperity.

He lauded GIK Institute for upholding merit and said that 500 girls belonging to different regions of the country were also pursuing higher education in various disciplines at the institute.

"If you have any financial or other issue, the provincial government will support you, meaning that your education will never be incomplete due to financial problems or other issues," he told students. He said that government would fully support them if they came up with any innovative and creative idea.

The chief minister announced 20 scholarships for students of tribal districts. "Whatever building you want to build in GIK Institute, the KP government will financially support you," he told Salim Saifullah Khan.

He said that he would hold a separate meeting with the management of GIK Institute soon and appreciate their ideas for promotion of education in the province.

Salim Saifullah Khan said the students were future leaders. "We selected only 800 students out of 8,300, who appeared in entrance test," he said. He added that 424 acres of land was provided by the provincial government to GIK Institute.

Prof Fazal said that provincial cabinet recently approved scholarships for students of the institute.

"We also work with departments of higher education, science and technology and IT boards," he added.

Later, during a visit to Abbottabad, the chief minister issued a stern warning to the people, who, according to him, tried to manipulate or change the result in Haripur's November 23 by-election.

He said that the country was on the verge of a major political development and accused 'state institutions' of failing to fulfil their responsibilities.

Addressing a public gathering at Chamba Devar stop in Havelian, he said that justice was being denied and democratic norms were being undermined in the country.

The chief minister criticised authorities for preventing him from meeting PTI founder Imran Khan, despite 'fulfilling all legal requirements'. He condemned what he called as mistreatment of Mr Khan's sisters in Islamabad.

He urged state institutions to fulfil their constitutional responsibilities. He said that powerful forces should read the writing on the wall. He predicted a decisive victory for the PTI-backed candidate on November 23, claiming there was no real competition in the upcoming election.

The rally was also addressed by several PTI leaders including Senator Faisal Javed, Junaid Akbar, Omar Ayub Khan, MPA Iftikhar Khan Jadoon, Uzma Riaz and Momina Basit.

PTI provincial president Junaid Akbar said that the party sought a "political struggle" and accused the Punjab government of restricting the supply of wheat to KP. He alleged that Haripur's mandate had been dishonoured and urged supporters to "take revenge" through the ballot on November 23.

— Our correspondent in Abbottabad Rashid Javed also contributed to this report

Kundi underscores importance of water conservation

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa governor, Faisal Karim Kundi, has said on Tuesday that climate change and conservation of water resources were critical national challenges.

Mr Kundi, according to statement issued here, was addressing a two-day long workshop on "impact of climate change on water resources in Pakistan" jointly organised by the University of Peshawar's National Centre of Excellence in Geology in collaboration with University of Engineering and Technology's Centre of Excellence in Water Resources Engineering.

Addressing the need for immediate action, Mr Kundi emphasised the necessity of constructing new dams and modernising the irrigation system across the province.

He noted the lack of significant measures in the past, highlighting water conservation was a collective responsibility. He stated that by effectively conserving water resources, vast tracts of barren land in the southern districts could be transformed into cultivable areas.

The governor emphasised that the water crisis was not just an environmental issue, but a challenge linked to national security, economy, energy and provincial harmony.

He highlighted the plight of farmers facing weather uncertainties, the growing water scarcity in urban areas and the deterioration of natural ecosystems.

The governor also pointed to the alarming rate of glacial melt in the Himalayas, Karakoram, and Hindu Kush ranges, which posed both short-term risks of floods and glacier lake outbursts and long-term threats of drought and food crises. — Bureau Report

Master plan for tourism zones in Swat reviewed

By Our Correspondent

SWAT: Key stakeholders at a workshop here on Wednesday reviewed the 2025-2045 Master Plan for the tourism zones of Upper Swat, covering Madyan, Bahrain, Mankiyal, Kalam and Mahodand, which aims to provide international-standard facilities to tourists visiting the region.

The workshop, organised by National Engineering Services Pakistan (Nespak) on the directives of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, brought together government officials, local representatives and other stakeholders.

Those in attendance included Director General Upper Swat Development Authority Shahzeb Abbas, Bahrain tehsil chairman Mian Shahid Ali, chief town planner and project manager Ahmad Masood, officers from various departments, notables, members of Kalam hotel association and representatives of local bodies.

The Nespak briefed the participants on the proposed reforms and development strategy for 2025-2045, underscoring the need to identify challenges in recreational and infrastructural development across these areas. This, they noted would assist in preparing a fully integrated and practical master plan for the region.

Officials emphasised that the purpose of the workshop was to ensure the planning process remained transparent, inclusive and acceptable to all stakeholders.

The secretary tourism has issued strict instructions for swift implementation of the master plan so that relevant departments may begin their assigned tasks without delay.

VACCINATION: A meeting on Wednesday reviewed the overall progress, performance and administrative measures of the ongoing measles-rubella and polio vaccination campaign chaired by additional deputy commissioner (general) Mohibullah Khan Yousafzai.

District health officer Dr Shehzad, district education officer (women) Hafsa Gul, DEO (men) Fazal Khaliq and others were in attendance.

The health department officials briefed the participants on the field performance of the campaign on its third day, including vaccination progress, reported complaints and refusals, and data related to school and household outreach.

The participants were also informed about team accessibility, the pace of coverage among the target age groups, and the administrative challenges faced during implementation.

Mr Yousafzai said monitoring, inter-departmental coordination and community engagement would be further strengthened in the upcoming phases of the campaign. He directed officials to focus particularly on low-coverage areas and ensure continuity of field visits.

He emphasised that role of elders, teachers, community representatives and religious leaders was crucial in addressing misconceptions among parents and the community to enhance awareness and ensure complete vaccination of children.

Afghan artists, families move PHC against forced repatriation

Claim they face persecution in Afghanistan

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: Around 400 Afghan nationals including artists and their families moved Peshawar High Court, seeking directives for government to stop their forced repatriation to Afghanistan in accordance with the principle of non-refoulment as they would face persecution in their homeland.

They field a joint petition, requesting the high court to issue directives to government to allow their stay in Pakistan as refugees.

The petitioners have also referred to an earlier judgement of the high court of Dec 13, 2024, in cases of some other artists and transgender persons, requesting that their plea might also be decided in line with that judgement.

In the earlier judgement, the high court had ordered federal government that it might itself or an officer notified by it consider cases of all those petitioners and should decide whether or not the essential ingredients for grant of asylum on the basis of preventing them from refoulment had been forthcoming in their cases and if said ingredients were found in case of one or more petitioners, then government should make a decision regarding grant of asylum for such period as might be determined by federal government.

The petition filed through Advocate Jabir Khan includes as respondents federal interior ministry, federal secretary of cabinet division, directors general of National Database and Registration Authority (Nadra), immigration and passport and FIA, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief secretary and its home secretary.

The petitioners include Zakiya Dunya Ghazal and scores of other Afghan artists and their families. They said that after taking over of Afghanistan by Taliban, it was dangerous to live there as artists/singers because they had openly announced that no activity like music concerts, etc would be tolerated at any cost there.

They claimed that they and their families along with thousands of other Afghans had to flee to Pakistan and had settled in Peshawar.

The petitioners stated that they along with their families approached UNHCR office in Peshawar, seeking their registration as refugees and consequently they were registered by allotting a specific token number of their registration as refugees by the UN agency.

They contended that federal government had streamlined a policy for repatriation of Afghan refugees to resettle in their country through a notification issued on Oct 10, 2023.

They stated that an agreement had taken place between UNHCR and governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan in 2003, wherein it was held that Afghan citizens' status as refugees would continue till restoration of durable peace in Afghanistan.

The petitioners have referred to several international conventions and covenants in support of their contention.

They contended that being a signatory to International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the government of Pakistan should honour civil and political rights of Afghan citizens as refugees.

Similarly, they stated that Pakistan was signatory to Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) under which it was binding on it to safeguard fundamental tights of Afghan refugees.

The petitioners referred to an earlier judgement of Supreme Court, stating that therein the apex court had clearly provided that the chapter of 'fundamental rights' provided in the Constitution of Pakistan was applicable not only to Pakistani citizens rather also to foreigners including Afghan refugees.

They contended that forced repatriation policy of government contradicted the existing UNHCR agreements and Pakistan's own international commitments. They argued that Afghan artists faced life-threatening risks in Afghanistan and couldn't return to their homeland.

It merits a mention that different categories of Afghan nationals have regularly been approaching the high court, seeking relief against their imminent deportation by federal government.